



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Public Health Committee

March 2, 2016

**Commissioner Raul Pino, M.D., M.P.H.
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House Bill #5459 - An Act Concerning Training in Cultural Competency for Dental Hygienists

The Department of Public Health (DPH) supports House Bill #5459 and provides the following information. This bill will add cultural competency to the continuing education requirements for dental hygienists.

Oral health is essential to overall health and wellbeing, yet oral health disparities exist for some Connecticut residents. For those with limited oral health literacy, limited proficiency in the English language, and those from cultures where oral health is under-valued or unattainable, accessing dental care with consideration to their cultural and linguistic needs can be challenging. In addition, the racial and ethnic composition of the state dental workforce impacts the availability of culturally competent care for the population served. In Connecticut, the dental workforce is not representative of the state's population. The most recent demographic data of dental hygienists in the state revealed that 86% were non-Hispanic white, 2.6% non-Hispanic black, and 4.1% Hispanic, while the state's population consists of 68% non-Hispanic white, 9.7% non-Hispanic black, and 15% Hispanic residents.

Passage of this proposal will ensure that Connecticut registered dental hygienists will receive education and training to develop their knowledge and capacity to deliver dental care in a culturally competent manner. Additionally, this act may provide some benefit in decreasing barriers to dental care, and in some populations, reducing disparities.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's view of this proposal.